Freeing elephants

2643. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has decided to free all elephants to wild for their safety and free movement; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Central Government has taken a decision to rehabilitate captive elephant only from Zoos to elephant camps/rehabilitation camps/other facilities available with the Forest Departments at National Parks/Wildlife Sanctuaries/Tiger Reserves for departmental use.

Permission for genetically modified crops

2644. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has granted permission to introduce genetically modified crops;

(b) if so, the details of such food crops and whether Government have studied the effects of GM food crops in the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether some State Governments have opposed Bt. brinjal and other crops on the ground that the farmers loose their rights over seeds; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) has approved the environmental release of several Bt cotton hybrids expressing six events. The GEAC in its meeting held on 14.10.2009 has also recommended to the Government that Bt brinjal is safe for environmental release taking into consideration the findings of the review by three high level technical Committees namely; the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulations and two Expert Committees constituted by the GEAC in 2006 and 2009. The decision of the GEAC on the safety of Bt. brinjal for environmental release is based on scientific facts/data generated during 2002-2009 and international experience with GM crops. The Government of India is following a policy of case by case approval of genetically modified GM crops. In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of transgenic seeds, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place before any GM plant is approved for commercial cultivation. This includes generation of relevant biosafety information and its elaborate analysis to ensure food, feed and environmental safety. The environmental safety assessment includes studies on pollen escape out - crossing,